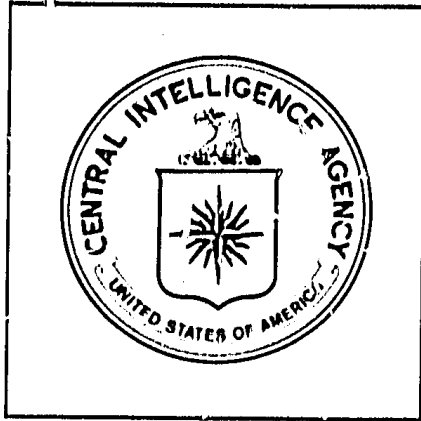


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STAFF NOTES:

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Brezhnev Mends Political Fences Before the Congress

Setbacks in foreign policy, the poor performance of Soviet agriculture, and poor health have had a negative impact on the political position of General Secretary Brezhnev during the last year. The erosion of his position has been reflected in some loss of confidence in his tenure among mid-level Soviet officials, and there have been reports that he has been criticized for paying too much attention to detente with the West to the detriment of the international communist movement and Soviet domestic affairs. Some of the criticism may reflect the normal political maneuvering associated with pre-Congress build-up, and there is no evidence of a serious political challenge to Brezhnev's leadership. Nevertheless, his publicly announced activities since his return from vacation in late August suggest that he is taking prudent steps to stake out a more balanced position by concentrating on those areas that he had been accused of scanting.

In mid-September, for example, he received Konstantin Zorodov, author of a hard-line article on tactics for foreign communist parties. The article was orthodox Marxism-Leninism and caused considerable controversy in the West concerning its implications for inter-communist party relations and even for detente. There was no ostensible reason for the meeting which only served to associate Brezhnev more clearly with a militant interpretation of party doctrine, a field he normally leaves to Suslov. Later that month Brezhnev did receive the Apollo-Soyuz crew, a meeting he could hardly pass up, but balanced it when he received veterans of the Stakhanovite movement, a doctrinaire form of labor competition much favored by Stalin in the 1930s.

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On October 3 Brezhnev received the President of Portugal although he did not attend a reception in honor of the visiting statesman. A few days later he met a high-level East German delegation at the airport and participated fully in activities involving the East Germans. On the 7th, he signed the new USSR-GDR Friendship Treaty and spoke at a celebration marking the 250th anniversary of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Talks with Syrian President Asad, Hungarian Premier Lazar, and Vietnamese First Secretary Le Duan rounded out the General Secretary's rather full schedule of public activities involving domestic affairs and the international movement in October.

Brezhnev's major detente-related activity this fall was the summit with French President Giscard. The meeting was marred by political differences and the cancellation of talks between Brezhnev and Giscard on October 15, allegedly because the Soviet leader was ill. During the first reception for the French President, Brezhnev endorsed detente but raised some eyebrows when he included a blunt phrase on the ideological struggle. According to a Tass broadcast, Brezhnev stated that the relaxation of international tensions "by no means eliminates the struggle of ideas." This is the standard Soviet position, but Brezhnev has not used the phrase in a public address in at least the last four years.

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Brezhnev was trying to reassure Soviet conservatives who have expressed some concern over the Western push for implementation of the Basket III provisions of the CSCE agreement.

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The summit was noteworthy in that it was not followed by a resolution from the Politburo, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, and the USSR Council of Ministers approving the meeting and Brezhnev's activities. The French-Soviet summits in 1974 and the Wilson-Brezhnev summit in February 1975 were followed by a resolution "fully and completely" approving Brezhnev's activities and the results of the meeting. The latest summit has been the subject of laudatory articles in the press, but the Soviet ruling bodies have not so far given it their imprimatur.

Equally striking in the foreign policy field was the failure of these bodies to approve specifically of the Helsinki summit and Brezhnev's activities there. The ruling bodies have "assessed highly" Brezhnev's contribution to CSCE and approved his speech there, but "full and complete approval" has not been reported in the press.

Brezhnev's health may be responsible for his limited contacts with Western statesmen this fall, but his active performance in other areas suggests that political considerations were an important factor. In trying to balance his public image and mute criticism from conservative elements in the Soviet Union, Brezhnev has been responding as a shrewd tactician to mend political fences at a time when plans are being laid to set the Soviet Union's course for the next five years. [REDACTED]

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Soviets Keep Sakharov Waiting

Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrey Sakharov has had no official answer yet to his October 20 application for an assured round trip to Oslo, the only condition on which he says he would go. Meanwhile, his wife has reportedly obtained an extension of her Soviet re-entry visa until December 20. The extension will enable Mrs. Sakharov, who was originally scheduled to return home at the end of October after eye surgery in Italy, to go to Oslo for the December 10 award ceremony. She may be planning to attend whether or not her husband is permitted to go; in the event he is not, she may hope to accept the prize in his name.

The Kremlin, in dealing with Sakharov's troublesome case, probably has not yet made a final choice among several options. These appear to be to:

- Let Sakharov go with assurances that he can return, i.e., granting his wish.
- Let him go with an explicit statement that he may not return, i.e., expel him.
- Let him go without assurances one way or the other on a return, i.e., allow both Sakharov and the Kremlin to delay decision on a return, with concomitant reciprocal risks.
- Refuse to let him travel abroad.

In making its decision, the regime will weigh several factors. Granting Sakharov's preference for a round trip would significantly enhance the morale and the stature of Soviet dissidents at home and abroad. But it could also result in a favorable Western press and give the regime's post-Helsinki image a welcome boost.

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A flat denial of Sakharov's application would have precisely the opposite effect on the dissidents at home and on the Soviet image abroad.

The two other options--explicit or implicit expulsion--run head on into Sakharov's refusal to leave the USSR under such circumstances and might require the same kind of heavy-handedness that accompanied the expulsion of Solzhenitsyn in February 1974. Sakharov, however, might be induced into voluntarily leaving for good if his wife is not permitted to return. While there is now no sign that she will be barred, the action of extending her visa through the award ceremony enhances the Kremlin's ability to consider this course.

The public campaign against Sakharov and the Nobel Committee's award has not yet reached a stage that would either rule out or point to any of the available courses of action. The campaign's weight and orchestration suggest, however, that Sakharov's chances of a round trip to Oslo are rapidly dimming.

The condemnatory statement signed last week by 72 members of the Academy of Sciences could presage regime pressure on the academy to expel Sakharov. Although most of the academy's leadership is among the signatories, only some 28 percent of the voting members signed. This is short of the majority needed for election or expulsion which, moreover, are conducted by secret ballot. The academy, however, is slated to elect a new president and governing organs soon, and it has recently appeared more vulnerable to a variety of regime pressures. One effect of this could be to accede to the party's wish for Sakharov's expulsion should it be strongly pressed.

The academy's statement may be followed by similar condemnatory declarations from other Soviet organizations and possibly by a "spontaneous" letter-writing campaign designed to give the impression

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of popular indignation. Signals such as the recent speculation in an Australian newspaper by charismatic Soviet journalist Viktor Louis that Sakharov will not be let out because of his knowledge of the Soviet nuclear program may be an indication of the preferences of some elements in the Soviet establishment.

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ANNEX: US-Soviet Relations
September 12 - November 6

Amid indications that Soviet relations with the US are undergoing more than routine scrutiny in the USSR, Moscow's public assessments of bilateral progress and prospects have remained in recent weeks uniformly optimistic. Soviet commentators have maintained a high level of criticism of specific US problems and policies, notably on defense issues, but continue to praise the accomplishments of detente. In the typically florid words of one *Izvestia* commentator in October, "the constructive, reasonable course established in relations between the USSR and the USA bears ever new fruit," despite all efforts by the adversaries of relaxation.

Many detente-spawned enterprises are in fact progressing routinely. Within the past six weeks several bilateral planning and review sessions have been held, including, inter alia, the fourth annual meeting of the joint commission on scientific and technical cooperation (Moscow), the sixth meeting of the US-Soviet Trade and Economic Council (Washington), and the seventh session of the SALT-related Standing Consultative Commission (Geneva).

The reciprocal tours of the US and Soviet Apollo-Soyuz crews in September and October were among the bilateral events most widely and favorably covered by the Soviet media in recent weeks.

Reflecting an eagerness to dispel doubts or perhaps to disarm current and potential critics of Brezhnev's US policy, Moscow remains quick to seize on administration statements in behalf of detente, giving them heavy coverage in Soviet domestic media. An *Izvestia* commentator noted in mid-October, for example, that Secretary Kissinger had "actually criticized the view of adversaries of international cooperation." Conversely, less favorable or qualifying remarks often go unreported.

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Soviet press coverage of the shifts in Washington this week has been essentially reportorial but, by judiciously quoting American commentaries, the message is being conveyed to Soviet audiences that the changes are likely to be favorable for the USSR.

Isvestia spoke of Secretary Schlesinger's "well-known differences" with Kissinger, "particularly on the question of detente and the strategic arms talks." It also noted differences between Schlesinger and Congressional advocates of reduced military spending.

The Soviets have been careful to note the President's statement that Secretary Kissinger would continue to play the dominant role in US foreign policy.

The Soviets evidently took in stride Secretary Kissinger's October trip to Peking, probably consoling themselves with the estimate that Washington's continued policy of detente with the USSR and the frailty and disarray in China's leadership would preclude rapid developments inimical to Soviet interests. Commentary on the event, while betraying Soviet nervousness, was marked by studied unconcern. Radio Moscow's international observers roundtable on October 26 carried the conclusion that "nothing new occurred in the bilateral relationship between the US and the PRC." Moscow implied that Secretary Kissinger had been unswayed by Mao's attacks on the USSR and efforts to undermine detente. The Soviet broadcast cited American press reports to the effect that "regarding detente, differences existed and remain between Peking and Washington."

Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko assessed the favorable "turnabout" in relations with the US in an article in the September issue of the party theoretical journal *Kommunist*. The article, part of a foreign policy survey probably prepared as a prelude to party congress deliberations, predicts that the detente course will be ratified at the congress, and

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expresses satisfaction with the "dominant trend" in US-Soviet relations. Gromyko added the familiar caveat, however, that in the US there are "complex social currents and influential forces hostile to cooperation with the Soviet Union." He specifically endorsed bilateral summitry, predicting that Brezhnev's coming visit to Washington would be "another major milestone."

Gromyko's ten-day visit to New York and Washington in late September was the occasion for high-level exchanges on troublesome issues such as the Middle East and SALT. In assessing his trip for the Soviet public, Gromyko adopted a low-key approach, characterizing the visit as "useful," and noting that both sides had endorsed a continuation of the improved relations of recent years. He acknowledged, however, that problems remain.

One such problem, Soviet unhappiness with the US role in the recent Sinai disengagement agreement, persists, although Moscow appears for the moment resigned to watching the US play out its hand in the hope that the problems of the area will eventually require that the USSR be dealt back in. Recognizing their present reduced influence with the Arabs, the Soviets probably have little expectation that an intrusive role at this time would produce results commensurate with the risk of damage to their US policy. Gromyko has specifically denied that the Soviets are engaged in any campaign against the new agreement.

Another delicate area of bilateral interest is arms control, a subject in which Moscow repeatedly professes interest. On October 10 the chief Soviet SALT negotiator said that the Soviet leadership would soon be turning to SALT decisions after a period of preoccupation with other matters. In Geneva, meanwhile, the sides continue to make slow progress on peripheral issues with the possibility of complete agreement in 1975 by no means assured.

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Slow progress is also being made at the Threshold Test Ban/Peaceful Nuclear Explosions (TTB/PNE) negotiations in Moscow. Movement toward a joint draft treaty and protocol on information exchange has been hindered by a Soviet reluctance to reach agreement on explicit provisions as opposed to general principles. The Soviets have been particularly uncomfortable about the verification provisions of a PNE agreement, especially the issue of observer access and procedures.

Continuing the recent practice of leadership meetings with influential US politicians of both parties, Premier Kosygin, on October 2, met for over two hours with presidential candidate Sargent Shriver. Kosygin expressed optimism about the future of bilateral relations and, lapsing into his usual preoccupation with economic issues, said the Soviet Union hoped within five years to raise the level of trade with the US to two billion dollars annually, excluding grain sales. A *Pravda* article on October 12, predicted with satisfaction that bilateral trade this year will exceed 1.7 billion dollars (evidently including at least some part of the grain turnover).

Soviet reaction to the bilateral grain agreement signed in Moscow on October 20 has been predictably subdued. Moscow has not publicized the terms of the arrangement, nor even acknowledged to the general public its existence. A Leningrad propagandist did, however, mention the agreement in a public lecture on October 26, characterizing it in favorable terms. The dismal Soviet harvest left Moscow with no reasonable alternative to meeting US demands for a less spasmodic approach to international grain purchases. Nevertheless, the negotiations were prolonged and the parallel talks on oil sales to the US are evidently proving difficult.

In an administrative move involving Soviet policy toward the US, Georgiy Korniyenko, chief of the

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foreign ministry's US department, was elevated in October to the rank of deputy foreign minister. Korniyenko has told a US official that he will continue to deal exclusively with US-Soviet matters; another Soviet official has interpreted Korniyenko's promotion as indicative of the growing importance Moscow attaches to relations with Washington.

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[redacted] Korniyenko's strength is currently being enlisted in defense of Brezhnev's policy of improved relations with the US. In recent conversations with American officials, [redacted]

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[redacted] Soviet spokesmen have alluded to serious differences over policy, including Moscow's US policy within the Soviet leadership.

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In late October, another Soviet official [redacted] [redacted] expressed concern about Brezhnev's physical and political well-being. He claimed that Politburo "hard liners" were making it very difficult for him.

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These proffered glimpses of controversy among the Soviet leadership are highly unusual, although perhaps more for being tendered at all than for their content. The motive for the revelations apparently lies in the hope that the US might be induced to make concessions on SALT in order to strengthen Brezhnev's hand against less congenial forces in the Kremlin. While this is not an unprecedented Soviet negotiating tactic, even at SALT, other fragmentary reporting on the General Secretary's physical and political

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health suggests that he and his detente helmsmanship may now be particularly vulnerable to setbacks in US-Soviet relations. It does not necessarily follow, however, that Soviet detente policy is as dependant on Brezhnev as he is on it.

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